



U.S. Fish &amp; Wildlife Service

# Southeast Region

## ***SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS***

MAY 2008 NEWSLETTER

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Mike Bryant. Photo by: Bonnie Strawser.

### SHC- It's time to sell the mule ...

For wildlife management, Strategic Habitat Conservation is the wave of the future. Riding that wave will require us to think and plan in ways that may be new to us. But, as with wildlife, the ability to survive and thrive depends on the ability to adapt to a changing world.

Mike Bryant, Project Leader for the North Carolina Coastal Plain Refuges Complex, likens his job today to that of an early 20th century farmer. "You can have two farmers plowing fields that are side by side....," Bryant explained, "One is driving a shiny new tractor and farming 400 acres; the other is plowing with a team of mules and farming 40 acres. The farmer on the tractor stops and calls over to the other... 'Hey, why don't you get yourself a tractor?' to which the old-style farmer replies, 'You don't understand... I don't have the time or the money to buy a tractor. I have these mules to feed, the harness

to repair, shoes to buy for the mules' feet, and the blacksmith to pay. I can't afford to buy a tractor, and I don't have the time to even think about it.' So, the farmer will trudge on, working hard from sun up to sun down to produce his 40 acres of crops."

"But, if he pauses to consider his situation, he'll recognize the value of taking a little time off from plowing to sell the mules and use that money as a down payment on a tractor, so he can plow more ground."

Several years ago, Bryant was faced with a similar decision. "We desperately needed a full-time law enforcement officer for this refuge. The old model of a collateral law enforcement workforce was going away – in seven years the refuge went from five collateral duty officers to one. A law enforcement presence was needed, and we would have seen the results on the ground right away. But, I knew I couldn't push for getting two positions. So, I chose to make a short-term sacrifice for a long-term gain. We hired a GIS person, because I knew for the long-term that was the most critical need. Now we're in a much better position to move into this new way of making management decisions. We eventually got the full-time law enforcement officer."

Moving into the future, wildlife management will require using the best available science and some workforce retooling. Sometimes we'll have to be willing to bear "short-term pain" for "long-term gain." To compete in the 21st century and to keep conservation of natural resources relevant, we need to embrace the new technology employed by science, and build capability and capacity to use the new technology, get comfortable with it, and put it to use managing fish, wildlife, and and plant resources and their habitats.

*Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River NWR, Manteo, NC*

## ***Behind the Scenes--***



Terry and Kathy on a bird watching trip. Photo by Joe Viljoen.

### **Global bird watching**

My passion is birds. In fact I am so passionate about birds that my wife, Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle, and I spend most vacations traveling around the world in pursuit of new birds.

While I'm much more compulsive about birding than Kathy, she enjoys them too. Our latest adventure took us to South Africa, where I saw my 3,500 lifetime bird. We have now seen all three species of South African cranes including the Blue Crane which is the national bird. Cranes are the most endangered group of birds in the world.

Bird watching puts things in perspective and gives a sense of the global connections. For instance, while in South Africa we saw several species of shorebirds fairly common in North America including the Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling, Red Knot, and Whimbrel. We also saw other species that rarely occur in North America such as the Common Ringed Plover, Common Greenshank, and Little Stint.

Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) challenges us to look at things on a landscape scale. For shorebirds that is the entire globe! In this case, the phrase "Think globally, act locally" couldn't be more appropriate.

*Submitted by Terry Doyle, Wildlife Biologist, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Naples, FL*

### **Frankie's and Brian's successful turkey hunt**

Three years ago, North Carolina started a youth and adult hunt on the opening day of turkey season on all state gamelands that allow turkey hunting by permit only. On this one-day hunt, adults and youths can take a turkey. Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge's Forestry Technician Brian Van Druten applied with Maintenance Worker Jonathan Powers' 14- year-old son Frankie. This is the second year Brian and Frankie were drawn. Last year, they got a gobbler within 12 yards but were unable to seal the deal.

Here's Brian's description of their hunt:

We arrived at 5 in the morning and headed to a strut zone I previously scouted. We set the blind and decoys in the dark and waited. We heard quail, cardinals, and the first Whip-poor-will of the year and had a deer feed within 30



Brian Van Druten and Frankie Powers with their turkeys. FWS Photo.

yards. Disappointingly, the beautiful sunrise was not greeted with any gobblers. I started some soft calling every 15-20 minutes. At about 7 a.m., I saw three gobblers strutting 600 yards down the lane! We moved in the blind to face their direction and began watching. Eventually, we saw two hens with them. They faded off into the woods after 45 minutes. I continued some soft calling, but not much was going on. At 9 a.m., a lone hen popped out about 300 yards down the lane. I gave Frankie the binoculars and told him to watch her and learn. About 5 minutes later, he said the gobblers were back in the path! I began watching them. They ran up to the hen, and two of the turkeys began strutting for her. She really didn't pay attention to them and fed away from them. Then, the lead gobbler saw our decoys, and I gave some soft calls. He began to come our way with the other two gobblers in tow.

I told Frankie to get ready because when they got close we wouldn't have any cover to move. They closed the distance at a decent pace. At 65 yards they all split and started walking three abreast. Earlier, we had discussed what to do if a double presented itself. At 40 yards, I asked if he was ready. They kept closing. O.K, One, Two, Three – Shoot! Kaboom! I ran out of the blind, and the third bird ran off. There they lay at 27 yards! I got to the birds and realized how good they were! Frankie's 19.5 lbs, 11 1/8" beard, 1.5" spurs, and mine 21 lbs 6 oz, 11" beard, 1.5" and 1 7/16" spurs, both true limbhangers. Wow! What a first bird for Frankie! I told him that it will be a while before he gets another one like that! I almost ran half of the half -mile back to the truck for the camera! What a morning, and this is exactly why I hunt!"

*Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina*

## ***Bragging Rights --***



Barrens Topminnows. Photo by Brad Bingham.

### **SHC and the Barrens Topminnow: addressing challenges facing this conservation effort**

A well-established strategic partnership is actively involved in captive propagation and habitat restoration efforts for the Barrens topminnow. Partners include the Service's Ecological Services, Fisheries, and Refuges programs, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the U.S. Air Force, the Nature Conservancy, and Conservation Fisheries, Inc. When this partnership began in 1997, the range of the Barrens topminnow had decreased to only two known populations in the wild. It was necessary to focus the efforts and the partners' individual programs on the species' conservation challenges and the needs of the landowners who could offer restoration opportunities. To date, habitat protection and restoration activities have occurred on 32 sites, 24 of which have been stocked with Barrens topminnows. Annual monitoring of the status of reproduction and recruitment of these reintroduced populations by the Service and its partners is a critical element in the conservation strategy. Tennessee Technological University and the U.S. Geological Survey also are researching the species' biology and its interactions with the Western mosquitofish.

The potential for drought and competition from the non-native Western mosquitofish are recurring challenges for efforts in restoring populations in the Barrens Region of the Eastern Highland Rim in Tennessee. Last year, water levels at two sites were not sufficient to sustain reproduction or further



Surveying for Barrens Topminnows. Photo by Brad Bingham.

***Submitted by Steve Alexander, Brad Bingham, and Geoff Call, Cookeville, TN, ES Field Office***



Invasive species know no boundaries and continue to degrade Florida's declining habitats. If landowners and land managers wish to achieve long term success, it is critical for them to collaborate with all stakeholders, including private landowners. The Florida Invasive Species Partnership (FISP), originally formed in 2006 under the Invasive Species Working Group as the Private Land Incentive Sub-working Group, is striving to focus statewide efforts on prevention, as well as treatment. By working together, we hope to encourage development of innovative management approaches, provide new tools, decrease implementation costs, and ultimately increase effectiveness.

During 2006 and 2007, FISP developed the dynamic “Incentive Program Matrix” of existing federal, state and local funding sources, incentive programs and technical assistance for private landowners in Florida. The interactive matrix database allows both private and public land managers to determine what current technical and financial assistance is available to best suit specific needs and coordinate control efforts

The Incentive Program Matrix and locally led CWMAs allows us to expand invasive species management efforts across the landscape and build community awareness. These coordinated efforts serve to protect our valuable conservation areas, public lands, and private lands from the continuing colonization of invasive species across the landscape.

5/19/2008

**The Conasauga Summit: Partners develop a conservation plan**

Frecklebelly madtom.... triangular kidneyshell.... pigtoes, pocketbooks, and logperch. The names were fun, but the business was serious on March 19-20, 2008, when representatives from 30 government agencies, universities, non-profits, and others met to develop a conservation plan for Conasauga River aquatic species. The Conasauga River basin may be small in size - the mainstem is only 90 miles long and drains a watershed of about 500,000 acres - but its aquatic diversity is huge. More than 90 species of fish and 42 species of freshwater mussels occur in the basin representing 12 to 14 percent of all freshwater fishes (about 800 species) and mussels (300 species) in North America.



Conasauga logperch. Photo by Conservation Fisheries, Inc.

Unfortunately, freshwater mussels have been declining for years, and recent surveys indicate fish populations rapidly decreased after 2000. Armed with this information, Georgia Ecological Services and The Nature Conservancy took action and organized the first Conasauga Summit to discuss possible causes, research needs, and management actions to conserve aquatic resources and minimize the impact of anticipated basin urbanization on stream health.

The Conasauga is a watershed in decline. But, thanks to scientists, land managers, and landowners, integrated and strategic steps towards recovery and conservation of this river and its resources are underway.

*Submitted by Robin Goodloe, Georgia Ecological Services, Athens, Georgia*

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**SHC Efforts Underway in Other Agencies**

Other agencies and organizations are realizing the critical need for and benefits of long-standing formal partnerships that form around science-based, adaptive, landscape approaches to conservation. An approach grounded with explicit measurable objectives tied to sustaining populations. Two examples of developing strategies are presented below. The first focuses on the component of SHC that deals with establishing objectives for decision-based monitoring, the second on deriving transparent population objectives at the national scale. As the Service moves forward with SHC, it will be essential to be engaged in such efforts as an active participant and in some cases leader in the broader conservation community.

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Objective-based Vegetation Management**

On March 24, 2008, representatives from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) gave a presentation on Florida's objective-based vegetation management (OBVM) system to regional office staff. FWCC land managers, in cooperation with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, developed an OBVM approach to resource management on state owned lands. When fully implemented, OBVM will improve operational efficiency and natural resource product delivery. This approach supports science-based land management decisions by setting clear, measurable management objectives for existing and historic natural communities. Management actions are taken towards achieving those objectives by methodically monitoring vegetation response at set intervals. OBVM quantifies the present and desired natural community and habitat conditions on managed areas;



incorporates a monitoring program to provide feedback on management actions; supports adaptive management strategies; and supplies FWCC with decision support and accountability for land management decisions. More information on Florida's OBVM is available at <http://myfwc.com/obvm/>.

### Partners in Flight Conference

A session entitled Regional Population Objectives for Landbirds: Methods and Process to Provide the Framework for a National Guidance Document was held at the 4th International Partners in Flight Conference in February 2008.

The session provided the first national opportunity to discuss methods and processes to set regional population abundance objectives for landbirds in support of the Partners in Flight Continental Plan and the Joint Venture's efforts in conservation design for landbirds. This is a high priority identified by the Partners in Flight National Implementation and Science Committees and the Joint Venture Science Coordinators. The session included examples of different approaches used to set regional population abundance objectives, and emphasized facilitated discussion of the pros and cons of each approach. Presenters were given specific instructions on the content of their presentations including a series of questions to answer. Outcomes of the discussion will determine the need and content for a potential follow-up national workshop with the goal of producing a guidance document on the topic. More information on the conference is available at <http://www.partnersinflight.org/events/mcallen/>. Abstracts from the population objectives session available [here](#).

*Submitted by: Christine Willis, Federal Assistance Office, Atlanta, Georgia  
Dr. Laura Brandt, Joint Ecosystem Modeling Team Leader, Davie, Florida*



Dam on the North Toe River slated for removal. FWS Photo.

### Strategic conservation focuses attention on rural mountain river facing changes

The Toe River Valley sits in one of the most undeveloped regions of the North Carolina mountains – a region soon to be linked to an interstate via a four-lane highway. It's also home to one of the most important populations of the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel – the only population that branches up multiple streams in a single river system. Thanks in large part to the Appalachian elktoe, the river system was identified as a priority habitat in the Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office strategic plan and the Southeastern Partners for Fish and Wildlife Strategic Plan.

Anita Goetz, Partners program biologist, works closely with the local Natural Resources Conservation Service office and local watershed group, Toe River Valley Watch, to provide funding for water quality improvement and stream restoration projects. She helped coordinate removal of a railroad trestle which had collapsed into the river, and she's working with two local organizations to get two decrepit dams removed.

From an education perspective, the Asheville Field Office has combined Service efforts to get kids outdoors with the high conservation priority of the watershed and gotten scores of students, from fourth graders to a high school eco-club, into streams sampling aquatic macroinvertebrates. This month, the Service will bring together students from the two high schools that serve the river basin on a float trip through Appalachian elktoe habitat. The Service has also partnered with a local non-profit and community

college to host a two-day workshop on responsible stewardship of private land.

*Submitted by Gary Peeples, Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office*

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### **Implementing SHC on the South's highest peaks**

Thirty-nine of the highest 40 mountains in the Eastern United States are in the Southeast.. Cold, high-altitude environments separated from similar climates by hundreds of miles, these areas have become home to a handful of extremely rare communities that are, in turn, home to several rare and imperiled species. While nearly all of these areas are in some form of conservation ownership, they're by no means shielded from threats including invasive species, woody species encroachment, and the trampling of wayward hikers.



Plant reintroduction on Grandfather Mountain. FWS Photo.

Numerous partners, including the US Forest Service, National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy are involved in protecting these areas. The Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office is working with these and other partners to (1) identify and prioritize among focal habitats and species, (2) identify threats, and, (3) implement structure monitoring, and appropriate management actions.

A key step in this process was a fall 2007 workshop on management of high elevation communities, organized and facilitated by the Service and the USDA Forest Service. The workshop brought together numerous agencies and organizations, helping create new partnerships and providing focus for the numerous organizations and people involved in the management of these areas.

*Submitted by Gary Peeples, Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office*



The cast and crew of the ENC/SEVA SHC Team on the banks of the Scuppernong River. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

### **SHC has landed in eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia!**

In February 2008, more than 40 professional biologists, ecologists, managers, and outreach specialists met at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge to kick-start Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) in the Eastern North Carolina/Southeastern Virginia

(ENC/SEVA) SHC Team work area (formerly the Roanoke-Tar-Neuse-Cape Fear Ecoteam work area). The two-day workshop was designed to educate staff and USGS partners on the strategic habitat conservation framework; outline current national and regional SHC team activities; and participate in a workshop activity to begin identifying biological planning information on migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and inter-jurisdictional fishes.

Dr. Ashton Drew from North Carolina State University presented an update on her project to build species-habitat models for the king rail, Swainson's warbler, and blueback herring. The project's objective is to assist refuges in stepping-down national population and habitat objectives for these species in the ENC/SEVA SHC Team work area. Ultimately, these models will aid in science-based, adaptive management for federal trust resources. The completed models will be available in June 2009. The project is funded as a Science Support Proposal through USGS.

During the second day, participants divided into three groups: Migratory Birds, Threatened/Endangered Species, and Inter-jurisdictional fish. Each group was asked to complete the following tasks: (1) define three to five biologically meaningful and manageable priority species; (2) determine if there are measurable biological objectives for these species; (3) identify what the team is already doing with respect to planning for these species; (4) identify gaps in current knowledge and potential partners to help fill those gaps, and (5) identify a set of priority actions to forward the biological planning element of SHC for these species.

The reports from the breakout groups as well as other information on the ENC/SEVA SHC Team are available at <https://intranet.fws.gov/region4/ncva-shc>.

*Submitted by: Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina*



Service employees participate in the America's Longleaf Charrette planning meeting to frame a conservation strategy for range-wide restoration of the longleaf ecosystems. (Picture taken by Tom Dardin)

### **America's Longleaf – A Restoration Initiative for the Southern Longleaf Ecosystems**

Longleaf pine forests once covered more than 90 million acres from Virginia to Texas and were a vital component to the nation's commerce and survival. Today less than three percent of longleaf forests remain. In response to this drastic loss and with a renewed sense of optimistic urgency, the Longleaf Alliance along with Federal and state agencies, and non-government organizations have formed the America's Longleaf Initiative to coordinate strategic restoration efforts throughout its range.

In March several Service employees participated in the America's Longleaf Charrette held at Auburn University to frame a range-wide strategic conservation plan and identify key technical and policy issues and actions relating to longleaf restoration. The conservation plan uses an SHC framework that will build upon ongoing biological planning and conservation design efforts for focal species representing key spatial habitat components of the longleaf ecosystems. Based on this spatial modeling and GIS analysis,

strategic focal areas built around core protected areas, such as refuges, will be identified for the most effective conservation delivery efforts of the on-the-ground private and public land-based restoration programs. Monitoring and adaptive management practices will be developed to continuously update efforts and serve as a benchmark to measure progress towards range-wide success.



The initial draft of the conservation plan will be presented at the Longleaf Alliance meeting in October. Any interested Service employee will have an opportunity to review and provide comments.

*Submitted by: Cindy Bohn, Ecological Services, Atlanta, Georgia*



Looking for something? These kids look for anything living in the water. FWS Photo.

### **Getting kids outside: Hatchery hosts Metro Atlanta Chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters for fishing and learning**

On Saturday, April 12, 2008, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery hosted a group of Littles and their Bigs from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta for a day of fishing and environmental education. The event was held during Children and Nature Month, as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Let's Go Outside initiative to connect children and families with nature.

The Big Brother Big Sister Atlanta Chapter traveled by bus from Atlanta to Warm Springs, where one of the country's 69 National Fish Hatcheries was established in 1899. The Littles and Bigs took part in the hatchery's Biologist-in-Training program to learn about fish and their habitats, and learned techniques of catch and release of catfish in one of the hatchery ponds.

"Emerging research shows that spending time in nature is good for children's health - physically, mentally and emotionally," says Vincent Mudrak, center director for the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center. "Research also shows that nature-connected children tend to perform better in school. We're happy to share nature with kids and adults who don't get this kind of opportunity to connect to the outdoors everyday."

"We hope this event will be the beginning of a life-long love of fishing," continued Mudrak.

The Fish and Wildlife Service partnered with Bass Pro Shops in Lawrenceville to provide each child with her or his own fishing rod combo to keep, a discount store coupon for each adult mentor, and store gift cards as special prizes. WenMarr Management of Fairburn, Georgia, that owns several local franchises of Wendy's restaurants, generously donated lunches for all participants and volunteers, as well as providing frosty treats for all participants for their return trip home to Atlanta. Additional support for the event was provided by the Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery, whose mission is to support the hatchery with a special emphasis on educating youth in Fish and Wildlife Conservation. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Judy Toppins building a fish. FWS photo.

*Submitted by Judy Toppins, Fisheries, Atlanta, Georgia*



Middle school students help plant a living shoreline. Photo by Melody Ray-Culp.

### Young people help bring life to the shoreline

Grasses in Classes is a hands-on education program enabling students to play a direct role in shoreline restoration projects. In early April, more than 50 children from teacher Paula Weaver's seventh-grade science classes at Merritt Brown Middle School planted smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) to create a living shoreline at Carl Grey Park in Panama City, Florida.

University of Florida Extension Agent Brian Cameron and Master Gardener Janet Psikogios explained how to put the plants into the sand and oversaw the operation. The team also helped revive the school's greenhouse so the students can propagate plants for projects like this, an important contribution since plant supply can become a restoration bottleneck. Our Coastal Program is providing funding to the West

Florida Regional Planning Council to establish these Grasses in Classes programs at schools like Merritt Brown in several Panhandle counties.

*Submitted by Melody Ray-Culp, Panama City, Florida Ecological Services Field Office*



The Steering Committee for the 2008 Wings Over Water proudly display the recently released OBX Wild. Steering committee members are (seated) Sandy Semans (Outer Banks Sentinel), Bonnie Strawser (U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service); (standing, left to right) Angie Brady-Daniels (Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce), Heather MacLean (Kitty Hawk Kayak and Surf School), Marlene Schumm (Roanoke Island Bird Club), Sue Carroll (Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce), Pat Moore (Cape Hatteras and Carolina Bird Clubs), and Suzanne Godley (Roanoke Island Festival Park).

### OBX Wild illustrates beautiful Outer Banks of North Carolina

The recently-released OBX Wild contains registration information for the 2008 Wings Over Water, as well as a wealth of beautiful photographs and informative articles about how people may enjoy the wildlife and wildlands of eastern North Carolina year round!

Pick up a free copy of the magazine at many locations in eastern North Carolina, view it online at [www.wingsoverwater.org](http://www.wingsoverwater.org), or contact the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce at 252-441-8144, to receive a copy. Wings Over Water will be held November 4-9, 2008.

*Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina*

### Students take to the streams at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

Warmer weather has brought more visitors to Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery and also has resulted in a tremendous flurry of school group activity! Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick, along with Environmental Education/Outreach Intern Kat Lynn, Intern Brian Wilburn, and fellow volunteers, have treated more than 350 students to a myriad of quality, hands-on, environmental education studies, with many more field trips already planned for the rest of April, May, and June.



Pre-school students enjoy a story with Environmental Education/Outreach Intern Kat Lynn. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Whether high school age or pre-school, all students have worked with elements of the Biologist-in-Training (BiT) Program, and perhaps the most favored part of any field trip thus far has been talking about what makes a waterway healthy by exploring a nearby stream. So whether flipping over rocks to look for macroinvertebrates or learning about aquatic adaptations, each student visiting the hatchery has walked away with a true connection to nature, one that the staff of Wolf Creek hopes will last a lifetime!

*Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky*



A newly graduated Biologist-in-Training stands ready and waiting for his turn to seine net. Photo by Amanda Patrick.



Crowd howls to the red wolves during April 19 event. Photo by Jaime Richie.

### Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges' Red Wolf howlings reach hundreds of visitors

Every year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Red Wolf Recovery Program and the Red Wolf Coalition jointly sponsor weekly howling experiences for the public. The 2008 summer schedule begins June 11, at 7:30 p.m. and continues each Wednesday evening through Labor Day. The highlight of the evening is having the chance to listen for the characteristic "howl" of one or more red wolves as they communicate with each other. While there are no guarantees that red wolf howls will be heard, audiences will definitely get a chance to try their howling skills, learn about red wolves, and experience the wilds of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge after dark. Over 1,000 local residents and visitors from across the United States attended these events during the 2007 summer months.

Participants meet on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge at Creef Cut Wildlife Trail at the intersection of Milltail Road and Highway 64. A short presentation provides an overview of the Red Wolf Recovery Program and the role of the Red Wolf Coalition, a Friends organization dedicated to the preservation of the red wolf species. Visitors have an opportunity to obtain red wolf literature and to see both red wolf and coyote pelts and skulls, track casts, tracking collars, and field photos. The Red Wolf Coalition has many items available for sale such as T-shirts, hats, bumper stickers and journals. The money collected from merchandise sales, plus donations, is used to support red wolf education and outreach programs. The organization also hopes to one day build a red wolf visitor center near Columbia, North Carolina, where red wolves can be viewed by the public. For a 2008 schedule or to register for a howling, please contact the Red Wolf Coalition office at 252-796-5600 or visit their web site at [www.redwolves.com](http://www.redwolves.com). A \$5 charge per person administrative fee is charged for the summer howlings. There is no charge for children five-years-old and under.

On Saturday, April 19, the howling commemoratng Earth Day, had approximately 40 participants. The wolves howled and howled. IThere was a full moon, although there is no scientific evidence supporting the folklore that wolves howl at full moons.

*Submitted by Diane Hendry, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina*

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### **Collaborative conservation for the endangered gray bat**

The gray bat was first documented in Anderson Cave near Birmingham, Alabama in the 1970s. Ever since this discovery, conservationists have been trying to protect this unique cave system that supports Alabama's southern-most maternity colony of this endangered species. Over the years, Anderson Cave has been plagued by intrusions from visitors who have, both intentionally and accidentally, disrupted summer maternity activities. Trespass into the cave has caused young bats to fall from the ceiling before they can fly – causing their death. This placed the small population in precarious standing. After over a decade of discussions, a partnership was developed between the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Birmingham Grotto of the National Speleological Society, the Birmingham Water Works, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A Memorandum of Agreement including a Cave Management Plan was signed by all parties in 2007, solidifying protection of the cave and its 4,000 summer residents. Under this agreement, controlled recreational access is allowed during the winter months when the bats are not present, and a perimeter fence, signs, regular monitoring and patrols have been established to protect the bats during the critical maternity season. An informational kiosk providing visitors with important facts about cave and karst ecology, and the rare winged inhabitants of Anderson Cave was developed and installed by a local Eagle Scout. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Gate at the entrance of Anderson Cave. Photo by Eric Spadgenske.

*Submitted by Eric Spadgenske, Alabama ES Field Office, Birmingham, AL*

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Doug Hunt talks about prescribed fire. Photo by Emily Neidigh.

### Successful spring environmental education programs at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

The visitor's center at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge re-opens this month, after Hurricane Katrina closed it two years ago. In spite of ongoing construction, refuge staff and volunteers conducted several environmental education programs. In mid-March, the refuge was involved in the Wetkids program with the Pascagoula River

Audubon. Students from several area schools came to the refuge to learn about cranes, fire, and carnivorous plants. These kids were involved in a project funded by an \$800,000 grant from the National Science Foundation's Academies for Young Scientists. The after-school program allows middle school students in Pascagoula to explore the gulf coast wildlife diversity and learn about career opportunities.

Refuge staff often teach about the importance of fire on the wet pine savanna, the incredible story of the endangered crane, and the wonderful world of botany through carnivorous assassins. They offered a similar agenda to the Ocean Springs Taconi fifth graders, as they were able to visit the refuge for the first time since Katrina closed the refuge in 2005. The spring environmental education programs have been going on for more than 15 years, with four days of students rotating through environmental education stations on the refuge lawn. Students were the first to experience the new refuge video, sneak a peak into the exhibit construction that was happening in the chained-off area, participate in scavenger hunts on the nature trail, feel the pressure of the fire hose, and dissect pitcher plants.



Butterwort, a carnivorous plant. Photo by Emily Neidigh.

*Submitted by Emily Neidigh, Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Gautier, Mississippi*



A presenter from Audubon Institute with her feathered friend. Photo by Pon Dixon.

### Swamp Safari at Southeast Louisiana Refuges

Southeast Louisiana Refuges hosted the third annual Swamp Safari on the grounds of the refuge headquarters April 14-17. A total of 334 special needs students and 120 adults participated in the event in crisp, beautiful spring weather. Students rotated through a series of six stations featuring wildlife and nature-related activities. Guest presenters included naturalists from the Audubon Institute and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and they brought live animals. Refuge personnel demonstrated wildland firefighting gear and training, and each student donned fire gear, completed a physical fitness course, and "put out the fire" with hoses from the fire truck. They also learned about the life cycle of black bear cubs, made fish art paintings, and enjoyed a wildlife hayride.

*Submitted by Byron Fortier, SE Louisiana Refuges Complex, Lacombe, LA*



### Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery celebrates Earth Day

On April 19, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery partnered with Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. and the Russell County Soil Conservation District to host an Earth Day Celebration. The event also coincided with National Environmental Education Week from April 13-19. With the Visitor/Environmental Education Center open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the day centered on a variety of organizations and agencies with booths promoting different ways to get connected to the natural world.

Agencies in attendance included the following: Russell County Soil Conservation District, Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Trout Unlimited, and the Russell County Middle School PRIDE Club. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery also had a booth, along with the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery.



Jennifer Hardwick, District Operations for the Russell County Soil Conservation District, stands by her booth, ready to hand out a variety of Earth Day goodies. Jennifer's grandmother (pictured to the right of Jennifer) also came to help with the event. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

With such a variety of agencies and organizations on hand, numerous offerings were available for those in attendance, including free tree seedlings (redbud and wild plum tree seedlings), birdhouses, energy efficient light bulbs, fly tying demonstrations, and guided nature hikes. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources also brought fishing poles for children who wanted to learn how to fish. More than 500 people were in attendance. The hatchery grounds abounded with family and friends walking, looking, and discovering their own new connections to the natural world around them. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky*



James Island Elementary School parents planting plants at the Outdoor Classroom. Photo by Jennifer Koches.

### James Island Elementary School's Outdoor Classroom project

It's been a dream three years in the making. But, as we all know, good things come to those who wait! Such is the spirit at James Island Elementary School after the dedication of their much anticipated Outdoor Classroom. The Outdoor Classroom, made possible in part with technical assistance and cost-share assistance through the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, was officially dedicated on April 3, 2008. Teachers, students, parents, volunteers, and community members packed the school's auditorium as blue grass music played and children cheered. School leaders praised the work that had been done to make this Outdoor Classroom a reality for the 520 students of James Island Elementary. Whether the subject is math, science, creative writing, or social studies, teachers at the school will use the Outdoor Classroom for all areas of academics. The students of James Island Elementary have eagerly watched as their Outdoor Classroom has taken shape. They have patiently awaited their chance to become more connected with the world around them. And for some, it will start right there at their school! Solidifying the commitment to the children of the school and others in the community, the school has pledged to make this Outdoor Classroom available for all to enjoy.

As Rachel Carson eloquently expressed, “Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts....”

The children of James Island Elementary and the entire community will have much to contemplate in the years to come at their new Outdoor Classroom. With all the contemplation will come great strength and resolve for being good stewards of the earth. More photos see [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Jennifer Koches, Charleston, South Carolina Ecological Services Field Office*

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### **Fifth annual Bayou Teche Bear Festival a huge success**

Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge held the Bayou Teche Bear Festival on April 19, in Franklin, Louisiana. Southeast Louisiana Refuges staff, along with the Lafayette Ecological Services Office, provided an entertaining and informative “Bear-y Patch” education pavilion, which was once again a great success. The Bear-y-Patch featured large displays about Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge, as well as the Bear Maze in which kids learn about the various habitat needs and the hazards faced by



The crowd enjoys refuge displays.  
Photo by Byron Fortier.

threatened Louisiana black bears. Eight other guest organizations also had informing and engaging displays and hands-on activities. The Friends of Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuges organized special refuge boat tours for 87 enthused visitors as part of the Bear Festival. The boat tours were a big hit with the passengers because this was the first exposure for most to the refuge and its beautiful cypress-tupelo swamp habitat.



Members of Friends of Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge sign visitors for boat tour. Photo by Byron Fortier.

*Byron Fortier, Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex, Lacombe, Louisiana*

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## ***Friends Group --***

## What do Friends Groups have to do with the Service's landscape approach to conservation?



More than 150 Friends Group volunteers visit Capitol Hill. Photo by National Wildlife Refuge Association.

The short answer is a lot!

The theme of the fourth annual National Friends conference, Friends for the Future, sponsored by the Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association was selected in recognition of changing times and the need for the Service and Friends Groups to respond to change. In the welcome letter Geoffrey Haskett, Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System, and Evan Hirsche, President, National Wildlife Refuge Association state: "Whether it is climate change, spreading urbanization or ever evolving technology, we must all be prepared for a future that will be quite different than the world as we know it."

Conference sessions focused on providing information on anticipated changes and potential strategies the Friends Groups can use in responding to change. Opening day plenary sessions addressing Climate Change and Connecting Children and Nature set the stage for three program tracks: Fish and Wildlife Service Priorities, Beyond the Boundaries and Friends Capacity Building.

Within the Fish and Wildlife Service Priorities track, climate change and Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) were addressed with a tag team presentation by Dr. Mike Scott, USGS and Dr. Laura Brandt, FWS. Dr. Scott challenged participants to think about a refuge that they care about and ask themselves: What was it when you first got to know it? What is it today? What do you want it to be 25, 50, or 100 years from now? From there, he described potential effects of climate change on habitats and species and related that back to implications for refuges. Some of his messages included: What happens outside the boundaries of refuges may have more influence on biological integrity, diversity, and health of refuges than what happens inside their boundaries. New tools, new ideas, and new relationships are needed to deal with emerging issues. We must come up with ways to increase the effective conservation footprint of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

With Dr. Scott's presentation as an introduction, Dr. Brandt explained how the Service's approach to landscape conservation will help the Service respond to change. She described the SHC framework and explained how using the framework will help the Service be more effective and efficient in our conservation, understand how individual refuges fit into the refuge system, how the refuge system fits into the overall conservation estate, and how the refuge system fits into the overall mission of the Service. She closed by explaining how Friends Groups can be involved by understanding the context of their refuge in the broader conservation estate, looking outside the boundaries of the refuge to potential threats and opportunities, and working with others to ensure that there are linkages among conservation efforts.

The sessions on climate change and SHC dovetailed nicely with the Beyond the Boundaries program track. Implementation of a landscape approach to conservation structured around the SHC framework can provide the scientific basis for addressing conservation on refuges and beyond their boundaries. The session description nicely captured both the need for action and the role that Friends groups can play: *Unrelenting residential and industrial development, resource extraction, and harmful public uses are*

*at the doorstep of our most prized wildlife lands and waters. Refuges are increasingly losing valuable buffer habitat and linkages to other refuges and conservation areas. Most refuges simply can't be expected to achieve their wildlife conservation mission without complementary land conservation activities beyond their boundaries. Through the use of creative conservation collaborations and initiatives, Friends groups can play a vital role in achieving multi-partner conservation victories across the country.*

The National Wildlife Refuge Association is pursuing a Beyond the Boundaries approach which was initiated by their 2005 report State of the System: An Annual Report on the Threats to the National Wildlife Refuge System which can be viewed at <http://www.refugenet.org/new-pdf-files/BeyondtheBoundaries.pdf>. The report states: "Unless we act now to protect lands and waters surrounding our nation's refuges, we may lose our magnificent wildlife heritage."

*Submitted by Dr. Laura Brandt, Joint Ecosystem Modeling Team Leader, FWS, Davie, Florida*

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## Hats Off --



The newly constructed observation tower. Photo by Gypsy Hanks.

### Observation tower built by employee saves Service \$300,000

Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuge has a newly completed observation tower for the public to view wintering waterfowl and the nearby bald eagle nest. The 24-foot, two-level tower was designed by Service engineers and construction was to be contracted for \$340,000. However, the refuge manager knew he had an employee who could build it. After purchasing \$40,000 of materials, Equipment Operator Mike Simmons went to work. Simmons worked on the tower for six months intermittently with other job duties. He had occasional help from other employees, especially with the roof! The public will enjoy his exemplary craftsmanship for many generations.

*Submitted by Gypsy Hanks, North Louisiana Refuges Complex, Farmerville, Louisiana*



Equipment Operator Mike Simmons. Photo by Gypsy Hanks.

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## Photo Album --

**Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery celebrates Earth Day -- more photos**



Jim Glahn, Friends of Wolf Creek NFH, Inc, receives a free energy efficient light bulb from Jean Clement, club organizer and sponsor for the Russell County Middle School PRIDE Club. Photo by Amanda Patrick.



George Smith, President of the Louisville-based chapter of Trout Unlimited, helps an Earth Day attendee learn more about fly tying. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

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**James Island Elementary School's Outdoor Classroom project -- more photos**





Joe Cockrell, Charleston Field Office Partners for Fish and Wildlife biologist, installing bluebird nesting box at the Outdoor Classroom. Photo by Jennifer Koches.



Osprey platform being erected by South Carolina Electric and Gas at the Outdoor Classroom. Photo by Joe Cockrell.

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**Collaborative conservation for the endangered gray bat:** All photos by Eric Spadgenske -- more photos



Gray bats in flight.



Gray bats in the summer.



Fence installation at Anderson Cave.



Informational kiosk with Anderson Cave fence in background.

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**Getting kids outside: Hatchery hosts Metro Atlanta Chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters for fishing and learning -- more photos**



First time casting with help from a Big. FWS photo.



Putting bait on a fishing hook with help from FWS employee. FWS photo.



Trying to catch something swimming in the stream. FWS photo.

## Visitor Services --

### Seasonal campers help staff of Southeast Louisiana Refuge Complex



Sharon Waldrop working at Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. FWS photo.

Seasonal camper volunteers accomplished several projects at the Southeast Louisiana Refuge Complex this winter. For the fourth year in a row, all five of the RV camper spots were utilized from November to March, or for slightly shorter periods. The campers volunteered 3,900 hours this season, and they were a tremendous help to our refuges. Some of their accomplishments included connecting all utilities, building a deck and steps to the new Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge office, building 80 frames for interpretive panels and installing half of them on kiosks and trails. Other projects included the installing an electric panel and rewiring the shop, maintaining the grounds, driving dump trucks, operating heavy equipment to assist our small maintenance staff, digging ditches and installing new gas lines, and developing digital photo files. The volunteers all possessed a great work ethic and friendly personalities. They are truly a part of our Southeast Louisiana Refuge Complex family.

*Submitted by Byron Fortier, Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges Complex, Lacombe, Louisiana*



Volunteer Dennis Williamson building a handrail. FWS photo.

## Wage Grade Profile --

### Wage Grade employees involved in conservation delivery on the ground



Wayne Rich prepares Barrens topminnows for distribution. FWS photo.

The Barrens topminnow is an extremely rare fish occurring in springs and spring influenced streams on the Barrens Plateau in south-central Tennessee. Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery (NFH) is an active member of the Barrens Topminnow Working Group (Group), a conservation coalition dedicated to the protection of existing populations of Barrens topminnows (BTMs) while restoring and enhancing other areas within the species historic range for future reintroductions. The Group will consider the BTM secure when there are 15 protected populations within the historic range of the species.

In support of this effort, BTMs propagated at Conservation Fisheries Incorporated in Knoxville and the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga are transferred to Dale Hollow NFH for grow-out and subsequent reintroduction into the wild. Restoration of imperiled fish is a non-traditional activity for a coldwater, mitigation hatchery, such as Dale Hollow. Hatchery Wage Grade employees play a significant role in helping conserve this rare fish by monitoring and maintaining recirculation rearing systems for juvenile fish, recording water quality data, feeding fish, and assisting in distributing fish.



Bill Osborn feeds Barrens topminnows. FWS photo.



Willis Smith monitors water temperature in a Barrens Topminnow grow-out tank. FWS Photo.

“Our wage grade employees have demonstrated a strong commitment and innate skill in helping develop the non-traditional partnerships and techniques required to make this program a continued success,” says Andy Currie, hatchery project leader. This shows that every Service employee has an important role in implementing Strategic Habitat Conservation.”

*Submitted by Andy Currie, Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery, Celina, Tennessee*

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